

Please replace the paragraph on page 10, beginning at line 5 with the following

amended paragraph:

LA3 First stopper device 30 includes a generally cylindrical first stopper supporting member 31 which is fitted around the outer cylindrical face of the bottom portion of first tubular member 21. First stopper device 30 serves as a stopper supporting member.

Please replace the paragraph on page 12, beginning at line 1 with the following

amended paragraph:

Q4 First rotation operating lever 51 has an operating tab portion 55, preferably in the shape of a curved plate having a curvature corresponding to the outer shape of first stopper supporting member 31. In other words the shape of first rotation operating lever 51 is preferably the same general shape as that of the outer surface of fitting cylindrical portion 33.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.121 as follows (see the accompanying "marked up" version pursuant to 1.121). Please replace claims 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 as follows.

3. (Amended) The stopper device according to claim 1 further comprising:
a rotation operating lever, pushing said stopper against or moving said stopper away from an outer surface of said second tubular member, thereby causing said stopper to prevent

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said second tubular member from moving when said stopper is pressed against said outer surface, or causing said stopper to permit said second tubular member to move by releasing said stopper from being pressed against said outer surface;

first and second bearing portions, facing each other at opposite ends of said stopper supporting member;

a stopper supporting hole, between said first and second bearing portions;

said stopper supporting hole formed at about a midpoint along an axial length of the overlapping portions of the first and second tubular members;

said stopper fitting in said stopper supporting hole.

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4. (Amended) The stopper device according to claim 2 further comprising:

a rotation operating lever, pushing said stopper against or moving said stopper away from an outer surface of said second tubular member, thereby causing said stopper to prevent said second tubular member from moving when said stopper is pressed against said outer surface, or causing said stopper to permit said second tubular member to move by releasing said stopper from being pressed against said outer surface;

first and second bearing portions, facing each other at opposite ends of said stopper supporting member;

a stopper supporting hole, between said first and second bearing portions;

said stopper fitting in said stopper supporting hole;

a supporting shaft portion of said rotation operating lever being supported by said first

sub B1 Cont'd and second bearing portions, permitting rotation thereof.

5. (Amended) The stopper device according to claim 3, wherein said stopper supporting hole is formed at the overlapping portions of the first and second tubular members.

6. (Amended) The stopper device according to claim 4, wherein said stopper supporting hole is formed at the overlapping portions of the first and second tubular members.

8. (Amended) A stopper device comprising:
a stopper;
a first tubular member;
a second tubular member fitting inside said first tubular member;
said stopper controlling movement of said second tubular member with respect to said first tubular member;

a stopper supporting member, fitted to an outer surface of said first tubular member, supporting said stopper;

said stopper supporting member having a first end and a second, opposite end;
said second end being proximate to a location where said second tubular member slides in and out of said first tubular member;

a first diameter of said first end being greater than a second diameter of said second end;

Sub B Contd

at least a second stopper;

at least a third tubular member;

said third tubular member fitting inside said second tubular member;

said second stopper controlling movement of said third tubular member with respect to said second tubular member;

at least a second stopper supporting member, fitted to an outer surface of said second tubular member;

said second stopper supporting member having a first end and a second, opposite end;

AB said second end of said second stopper supporting member being proximate to a location where said third tubular member slides in and out of said second tubular member; and

where a first diameter of said first end of said second stopper support member being substantially the same diameter as said second diameter of said second end of said stopper supporting member, whereby when said second tubular member is completely inserted in said first tubular member, said stopper supporting member meets said second stopper supporting member, forming a substantially even outer surface therebetween.

Please add the following new claims:

Sub B Contd 11. (New) A stopper device according to claim 1 further comprising:

first and second bearing portions disposed on said stopper supporting member;